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# ST. LAWRENCE RIVER

## AND THE THOUSAND ISLANDS

### HISTORY AND LEGENDS





**ST. LAWRENCE RIVER  
AND THE  
THOUSAND ISLANDS**

**HISTORY AND LEGENDS**

**By Richard Coughlin**

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## HISTORY OF THE THOUSAND ISLANDS

The great highway of the north and west during the decades when the early French explorers, missionaries, colonizers and traders were searching out an unknown continent, the St. Lawrence River, trade artery and summer playground, is rich in historic incidents and legends. Across it has swept the tide of contending empires in the long struggle between white races for dominance in the new world, just as the Indian tribes and nations had made it debatable territory for centuries before the coming of the palefaces.

Indians of the Algonquin tribes of the north and Iroquois of the Five Nations to the south of Lake Ontario first used the river for hunting and fishing excursions and frequent war expeditions. When Cartier, de la Roque, Champlain and their hardy soldiers, sailors and traders established the first trading settlements on the lower St. Lawrence they were told of the mighty stream whose length was measured in terms of days, and beyond that river were vast expanses of fresh water leading to regions of which the Indians knew little more than campfire legends.

### *Jacques Cartier*

It was Jacques Cartier whose explorations of the lower St. Lawrence with two vessels in 1534 are first recorded, though Cartier believed that he found evidence and talk

among Indians of previous explorations by Spaniards who were disappointed in their search for mines or other riches. For years previous the waters about Newfoundland and the islands at the mouth of the St. Lawrence had been frequented by Breton, Norman and Basque cod-fishermen—according to tradition even before Columbus discovered the islands of the West Indies in 1492. In the next year Cartier returned and on the 10th day of August landed on the shores of a bay in the lower river, which bay he named St. Lawrence in honor of that saint's day. The river has taken its name from the bay named for the Spanish saint.

Cartier sailed up the St. Lawrence as far as Quebec, and later visited the present site of Montreal, where a great Iroquois Indian camp was found. The winter was passed at a camp constructed near Quebec, a winter of great privations and disease which took heavy toll of the adventurous band. In 1536 the explorers returned to France without finding that passage to the Indies so much desired, or the illusory land of gold and rubies and wealth described by the crafty Indians.

### *Francis de la Roque*

In 1542 Francis de la Roque, with a commission from King Francis First of France, sailed up the St. Lawrence and founded a station between Quebec and Montreal, or Hochelaga, as the Indians called their ancient meeting place, and site of a fortified village of an Iroquois tribe.

It was at the river of Cap Rouge, the same place where Cartier and the men of his third expedition had spent the previous winter, under direction of de la Roque, who intended to follow the same year. Cartier held the title of Captain-General of the expedition of 1541, but would not remain with de la Roque when the latter arrived with more colonists the next year. Cartier returned to France. The first settlers experienced many hardships from unfriendly Indians, wild animals and sickness incident to poor provisions and a winter climate to which they were unaccustomed, with the result that these trading posts were abandoned and those who remained alive returned to France, or in a few cases men abandoned the life of the whites, and were adopted into Indian tribes.

Not until the seventeenth century did any white man record the complete journey from Montreal to Lake Ontario, "beautiful lake" as it was interpreted in the Indian tongue. These dusky natives told many stories of the countless islands and broad waters "ten days above the rapids that are near Montreal," as a grand-nephew of Cartier wrote in 1587. The lower reaches of the river from Montreal to the sea early bore the name St. Lawrence, but for decades the mighty stream of blue water flowing from Ontario to Montreal was called the "Great River."

*Samuel de Champlain*

Champlain, the able governor-explorer of New France,

himself recounted in detail the wonders of scenery, the Indian customs and laws and the possibilities of developing the region to the spiritual and material benefit of the aborigenees as well as to the greater honor and glory of his native France and her children. Champlain was the first great explorer and exploiter of the region beyond Montreal, though historians disagree as to whether he ever made the complete journey through the St. Lawrence. For years he continued in personal contact with the chiefs and visited the tribes from Lake Huron to Lake Champlain, which latter he discovered in 1609, and the former in 1615. He became a great father to the northern Indians, counseling them in their troubles and disputes, and bringing them greater comforts and wiser provision for the future through the influence of trade and commerce early established on a large scale at Montreal.

In 1608 Champlain renewed the effort to found a permanent colony in New France, sailing up the St. Lawrence to the site of Quebec and building a fortified station on the land between the river's edge and the high rock which in later years became the stronghold of the lower river. Champlain also visited Hochelaga, the present site of Montreal which Cartier had visited seventy years before, but Champlain found no trace of that heavily-stockaded Iroquois town—only a few families of the Algonquin Indians living in rude shelters. This was one year after Jamestown in Virginia was settled by that English company which endured so many hardships before relief



came, and they were able to win a living from the soil and woods.

### *Discovery of Ontario*

In 1615 Champlain crossed the upper entrance to the St. Lawrence, at the mouth of Lake Ontario, with a war party of Hurons who had come down the Trent river and through the Bay of Quinte, bent on vengeance for past depredations of their ancient enemies, but kindred people, the Iroquois of central New York. In October of that year he landed on the south shore of Lake Ontario, near Henderson Bay, five years before the first white settlers landed on the Massachusetts coast and six years after the Dutch landed on Manhattan and sailed up the Hudson river. The expedition was not successful, and returned to spend many weeks in hunting game for the winter near the site of the present city of Kingston. It was not until the following year that Champlain was able to return to his settlements at Montreal and Quebec, as the Indians used various pretexts to keep their wise counselor with them throughout the cold months until spring loosened the ice in the northern rivers. Champlain passed the winter in the Huron country and returned by way of the Ottawa river.

In following decades the St. Lawrence river saw an increasing flotilla of canoes, batteaux and galleys of the traders, explorers and zealous French missionaries pushing westward. Among the Thousand Islands the traders

stopped to barter for pelts, the explorers gained information of the lakes and rivers of the west, and the missionaries learned of the tribes and tongues of the new wards of old France. The Island region was a great storehouse of food for the red men, who came in large numbers during the fall months to catch and dry or smoke the pike, muscallonge, eel and sturgeon of these waters, returning to their winter encampments with heavily laden conoes. The early missionaries and voyageurs remarked upon the varied beauty of Island scenery, the broad and narrow reaches of blue waters, and the great abundance of game and fish. "Les Mille Isles" or "Lake of the Thousand Islands" it was called by the French, and the English later used the same titles.

### *The Indian Barrier*

Though Indians of the Algonquin and Huron tribes frequented the Thousand Island regions for hunting and fishing purposes, yet it was the northern rampart of that remarkable federation, the five nations of the Iroquois—later called the "Six Nations," when a kindred people, the Tuscaroras of the Carolinas, were admitted to membership. Here the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas and Senecas gathered for fishing, and expeditions to the smaller beaver lakes lying inland a short distance on the south of the St. Lawrence. These hardy warriors, especially the Mohawks, made frequent raids to the headwaters of the Ottawa river as well as to the foot of the

rapids above Montreal, waylaying their enemies, killing and plundering, and never becoming subject to the French authority. Frequent truces were made, principally through the efforts of the intrepid missionaries, but these lasted for only a short period, and then again the war drums would sound, orators would carry the word from nation to nation of the central New York warriors, and again the forest trails would be full of painted savages seeking plunder and scalps. From the St. Lawrence to the Ohio river and from the Main woods to the Mississippi these savages carried their war raids, exacting tribute or exterminating their enemies, the latter lacking especially discipline and the disposition to unite for common defense.

The friendship which these Iroquois bore the Dutch and English was due in the first instance to Champlain's encounter with the Mohawks at Lake Champlain in 1609, when the red warriors of the federation were defeated by their ancient enemies the Algonquins, aided principally by the muskets of Champlain and his two white companions. To this encounter may be traced the long history of border warfare which held back French settlement along the Great Lakes, and enabled the English colonists to expand and accumulate power behind the narrow barrier of Iroquois until at last the British wrested control of the "Great River" and its settlements from France.

## *The Missionary Explorers*

From the time of Champlain's memorable journey across the headwaters of the St. Lawrence in 1615 until 1653 no white man recorded any impressions of the scenery of the Thousand Islands, though it is probable that venturesome French traders unknown to history were carried by Indian friends up through the waters of the "Great River." The first man to write of those impressions was Pere Poncet, a Jesuit missionary, who had escaped from captivity among the Mohawks and in 1653 reached the shores of Ontario, where his Indian guides fabricated a canoe and paddled him to Montreal and safety. The missionary's impressions were rather solemn ones, for the bold rocks and bluffs, the dark woods and shrubbery of the Islands seemed to him forbidding.

In 1654 Father Simon le Moyne, another Jesuit, paddled up the St. Lawrence through the countless islands, along the eastern shores of Ontario, and through the Oswego river to the Onondaga country. Le Moyne was the white discoverer of the Onondaga salt springs, and told of the quality of salt obtained by boiling down the waters—equal to that obtained from sea water. Following these men came Father Chaumonot and Father Dablon in 1655, and in 1656 Joseph Lamercier, followed by Father Paul Ragueneau in 1657. In 1658 the Indians plotted the murder of the French missionaries, but the latter discovered the plot in time to escape from the

savages on March 20 of that year. They found the entrance to the St. Lawrence still frozen, but chopped their way through the obstruction and landed at Montreal on April 3. In 1661 the zealous missionary Le Moyne again paddled up the St. Lawrence and Ontario, through a region infested with Mohawk war bands, to the camps of those Onondagas who had previously treated him with respect.

For a decade the Iroquois increased the number of their war raids down the St. Lawrence, waylaying trading parties and camps of Canadian Indians and trappers.

A great earthquake brought terror and confusion to the native and white inhabitants of the St. Lawrence region in 1663. First great tremors were felt in February, and the last diminishing ones in August. There were tremendous upheavals that changed hills and rivers, according to narratives of that period, but there are no comparative topographical records to show what changes followed the series of disturbances.

The tide of French trading and exploration was stemmed by the frequent and continued raids of the Iroquois war bands, who descended the St. Lawrence or crossed the end of Ontario to the present site of Kingston, to paddle up the Cadaraqui river and waylay traders and trappers along the Ottawa river. The Iroquois had by this time obtained guns and powder from the Dutch at

Albany, and had become experienced in the use of fire-arms.

### *Governor Courcelles*

A new governor of Canada, Seigneur de Courcelles, with the able assistance of Marquis de Tracy, organized counter attacks upon the Mohawk raiders in 1665-66, and peace negotiations were entered into, resulting in the French traders resuming their adventurous traffic up the river through the Island country and beyond toward the west. La Salle's first voyage up the St. Lawrence, through the Thousand Islands and on to the western lakes and rivers was made at this time. Through La Salle, Marquette, Joliet, Du Luth, Cadillac and others, whose names are perpetuated in the geography of the middle west, France was to gain the vast inland territories of North America.

Governor Courcelles, in 1671, made the journey from Montreal to Ontario, entering the lake on June 12. Here on one of the eastern bays (undoubtedly Chaumont, Henderson or Black River Bay) he met a band of Iroquois hunters and fishermen, who had been told of the governor's coming by the missionary Le Moyne, sent on in advance. Besides the canoes of his white and red attendants Governor Courcelles had brought along a flat-bottomed galley of two or three tons, with which to impress the Indians. Courcelles was able to appreciate the advice offered by the French intendant, Jean Baptiste

Talon, that two posts should be located on the eastern end of the lake, one on the north and another on the south shore. This was the first official action taken toward a settlement on the upper reaches of the St. Lawrence, but it remained for the next governor to carry out only a part of the plan.

A description of navigation on the St. Lawrence and Ontario contained in an account of Courcelle's expedition is of interest to present-day visitors to the Islands who have experienced some of the difficulties of navigation in the rapids and swift waters between Ogdensburg and Montreal:

"When the mouth of the Great Lake is reached, the navigation is easy, when the waters are tranquil, becoming insensibly wider at first, then about two-thirds, next one-half, and finally out of sight of land, especially after one has passed an infinity of little islands which are at the entrance of the lake in such great numbers, and in such a variety, that the most experienced Iroquois pilots sometimes lose themselves there, and have considerable difficulty in distinguishing the course to be steered in the confusion, and as it were in the labyrinth formed by the islands. Some of these are only huge rocks rising out of the water, covered merely by moss or a few spruce or other stunted wood, whose roots spring from the clefts of the rocks which can supply no other element or moisture to these barren trees than what the rains furnish them.

After leaving this abode the lake is discovered appearing like unto a sea without islands or bounds, where barks and ships can sail in all safety so that the communications would be easy between all the French colonies that could be established on the borders of this great lake which is more than a hundred leagues long, by thirty or forty wide."

### *Count de Frontenac*

Count de Frontenac succeeded Courcelles when the latter's ill health caused retirement in 1672, and in 1673 the new governor decided to visit the head of the great river with an imposing array of military. He left Montreal on June 3, with one hundred twenty canoes and two flatboats, carrying about four hundred men. Guides sent by La Salle conducted the expedition to the present site of Kingston, or Cadaraqui as the Indians sometimes called it. Frontenac explored the bays and shores of the eastern end of Ontario, and held a great conference with the Iroquois warriors and chieftans, impressing upon them the might of France and the necessity for keeping peace. On July 13 a fort was laid out by the engineer Raudin, and when completed was left in command of La Salle.

Governor Frontenac named his fort "Frontenac" and also gave his name to the lake, but the latter name did not remain long with early mapmakers. La Salle's energy and foresight brought an increasing trade to the fort, and a growing white settlement around it. Friendly.



Indians made permanent camp nearby, and the St. Lawrence river bore a great traffic in furs and the innumerable articles of barter carried by the traders.

La Salle was created a noble by the King of France in 1675, and was given seignorial rights over Fort Frontenac and the nearby islands, as well as a monopoly of the hunting and fishing on Ontario and its rivers. La Salle's reports tell of the vast number of otter, bear, moose, elk and other game found in the woods and islands, as well as whitefish, salmon and trout of lakes and streams.

One of the early historians or descriptive writers was Louis Hennepin, a member of the Reccolet order, who was stationed at Fort Frontenac for missionary work among the Indians. He visited the tribes from the Ottawa to Niagara and the Mississippi country, and ventured inland to the south and east of Lake Ontario to the villages of the Oneidas and Mohawks during the winter of 1677. From the latter journey he returned by way of the Black river to Ontario and Fort Frontenac. His book of travels with its quaint illustrations is of interest to those who delve in early history of North America.

### *Governor de la Barre*

In 1682 a new governor was appointed to succeed Frontenac, who was recalled to France. At this time La Salle was absent in the west where he had made ex-

tensive explorations. The post at Frontenac was not profitable, though trade was extensive, and the new governor, Marquis de la Barre, seized the post and seignorial rights which he declared La Salle had forfeited by not maintaining an adequate fort. Two years later in 1684 La Barre was compelled to collect a force of eight hundred whites and two hundred Indians for an expedition to the south shore of Ontario. This great array of soldiers, militia, traders and coureurs de bois may have presented an imposing spectacle as it wound through the channels of the Thousand Islands, but at the La Famine bay conference on the south shore of Ontario it was depleted and discouraged by fever and loss of provisions due to dampness. The result of this conference, which was arranged to make a formidable impression upon the savages, was an inglorious peace with the Iroquois, who had been waging a successful war with the western allies of the French, the Illinois.

### *Denonville's Expedition*

A new governor, Denonville, succeeded the unfortunate La Barre, who had previously won military laurels in the service of France in the Indies. In 1687 another military expedition came up the river from Montreal to Fort Frontenac. On July 4 the expedition of some sixteen or seventeen hundred men in forty batteaux and many canoes crossed the end of Ontario as far as the island "des Galots" and on the 6th reached La Famine, scene of La

Barre's humiliating experience. Denonville completely circled the lake with his forces and restored somewhat the prestige of France. Owing to the seizure of Iroquois warriors at Frontenac, and to intrigue on the part of an Indian ally of the French, Chief Kondiaronk of the Dinondadies of Michillimacinac, as well as the encouragement given the Iroquois by the English governor of New York, Jacob Leisler, the border warfare was renewed to such an extent that Fort Frontenac was invested, and this post as well as the French post at Niagara were abandoned in 1688 by the depleted garrisons. Again the Iroquois had wrested control of the upper St. Lawrence, the highway to the west, from France and the savages continued their raids to the outlying farmlands at Montreal, burning and slaying and taking hundreds into captivity.

### *Frontenac Recalled*

Frontenac was now called upon by the French King to resume the governorship of the hard-pressed colony, and the sturdy old Count soon undertook to restore and protect the former trade routes. In 1695 he sent up the St. Lawrence a strong force to rebuild and garrison Fort Frontenac, and in July 1696 the great military expedition of two thousand men embarked for the journey up the river. The soldiers and their Indian allies, the latter commanded by the scout Mantet, remained at Frontenac from the 18th to the 20th of July, and then re-embarked for an invasion of the Iroquois lands. Camp was made

over night at Grenadier Island on the eastern shore of Ontario, and on July 28 the force proceeded up the Oswego river. The Onondagas and Oneidas were compelled to make peace, and the expedition returned completely successful after three weeks of arduous efforts.

The St. Lawrence outposts were made secure to the French for over sixty years, with the result that trade and settlements on the lower river increased and prospered. The new lands about the Great Lakes to the westward were sought out by soldier-explorers, traders and missionaries and the foundations laid for a great empire. Fort Frontenac remained in possession of the French until wrested from them by the English in 1758, during those last few years of border warfare which gave Britain dominion over the vast northern territories of New France.

### *The English on Lake Ontario*

A formidable step in the rivalry for trade and power between the two conflicting forces along the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes was the establishment by Governor Burnet of the Province of New York of a fort at the mouth of the Oswego river in 1727. The English had maintained a trading post at this old Iroquois camp site, Swa-geh, for five or six years previous to the establishment of a fort, and when the latter was built the French governor, Marquis de Beauharnois, made vigorous objection. An agent of the French governor known as

Chevalier Begon was ordered to proceed to Oswego and demand the surrender of this post situated on lands claimed by the northern colony. Begon held a great parley with representatives of the Onondagas and Oneidas on "Galots" island in Lake Ontario, previous to his visit to Oswego, and these Indians agreed to demand the exclusion of the English from their lands. They failed to make any such demand, and Begon's mission to Oswego brought no response from the English.

For thirty years down to 1755 there was peace along the northern frontier, and both French and English trade and settlements grew and prospered. There was keen rivalry for barter and influence with the Indian tribes of the border waters and the great forest country of the central west. The French built a few small armed craft at Fort Frontenac for trading and courier services, and the English constructed similar craft at Oswego.

### *La Presentation*

Another trading post and mission center was established by the French on the south side of the St. Lawrence in 1749 at the mouth of the Oswegatchie, called La Presentation, where the city of Ogdensburg now stands. A Sulpician father, Francis Picquet, was given charge of the mission, having under his care a number of Indians of the Iroquois who had decided to settle along the St. Lawrence under the friendly guidance of the French, who were anxious to gain recruits from these fierce allies of

the English. A storehouse and small fort were erected, but were destroyed within the year by a war party of Mohawks, who also burned two craft moored before the post. Soldiers were thereupon sent to the post by the French, and the Indian settlement grew steadily, to the annoyance and displeasure of English officials and colonists of New York. A protest was made before the congress of English colonists at Albany in 1754, because the position was recognized as of decided strategic value in the long-threatened conflict, which broke out in 1755. La Presentation was an outfitting station and information center during the following years of border warfare, and many raids were planned upon the frontier stations and settlements of the English as far south as Pennsylvania and Virginia.

### *The War of 1755-60*

Upon the renewal of hostilities in 1755 the St. Lawrence became a great highway for military activity upon the part of the French. The forts at Frontenac and Niagara were strengthened, and Governor Vaudreuil made active preparations for carrying the war into the enemy's territory. In August a detachment of military proceeding up the St. Lawrence met a body of Indians among the Islands, with scalps taken at the defeat of the English General Braddock at Fort Du Quesne. This news brought additional Indian reinforcements to the side of the French.

Early in the following spring as soon as ice was out of the St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario the French established a fortified camp on the south side of the lake, at the present end of Six Town Point, guarding the waters of "Nioure Bay" and the shores and portage to Stony Creek, from the present Henderson Bay. The camp was in charge of Captain de Villiers, and was named "Camp l'Observation," for the use of scouting parties and to watch the passages along the eastern end of Lake Ontario. An English scouting expedition encamped on the "Ile aux Galots" a few miles out in the lake was surprised by Indians from the French camp, and a number killed or captured, a few regaining their sloop which carried them to safety at Oswego. Later in 1756 occurred the first naval battle on the Great Lakes, when two French vessels attacked three English sloops in the vicinity of the Ducks islands, in Ontario, putting two of the English craft to flight and capturing the third sloop with fourteen men aboard.

The Marquis de Montcalm had arrived from France to take command of the French forces, and in May, 1756, a force of thirteen hundred regulars, fifteen hundred colonials and two hundred and fifty Indians proceeded up the St. Lawrence to Fort Frontenac. Earlier in the year before the snow had left Lieutenant de Lery, a Canadian militia officer, had led an expedition on snowshoes from La Presentation, at the mouth of the Oswegatchie, against Fort Bull near the present city of Rome, N. Y. His

force of two hundred and fifty Canadians and a hundred Indians compelled the surrender of the fort. De Lery destroyed the stores at the fort and returned with thirty prisoners along the south and west banks of Black River to Ontario, and was ferried across to the north shore of Black River by French batteaux on a scouting expedition from Frontenac. This must have been one of those "record" years for an early break-up of ice in the lake and bays. De Lery's force marched through the unbroken forest to the St. Lawrence and down the shore to La Presentation.

### *Fall of Oswego*

On August 5, 1756, Montcalm's main force left Fort Frontenac for the attack on Oswego. His regular troops were the three regiments of Guyenne, Bearn and La Sarre, the latter having been sent on ahead July 29 to camp de l'Observation. Montcalm's forces remained two days on Galoup Island because of storms, and on August 8 arrived at the camp located on "Nioure Bay," as the waters of Black River Bay and Henderson Bay were then termed on the uncertain charts of the period. On the 9th the troops proceeded overland to Stony Creek, and along the sandy shore of Ontario toward Oswego which they reached on August 12. After a few days of siege the English commander, Colonel Mercer, surrendered the older Fort Ontario on the east side of Oswego River, the newer position, Fort Pepperell, on the west side having



been abandoned on the approach of the French. Over two thousand men, with all of their arms, cannon and military stores were taken back by way of Camp de l'Observation to Fort Frontenac and carried down the St. Lawrence to Montreal, the prisoners later being exchanged. The French did not attempt to garrison Oswego, but razed the fortifications, and sent all available troops down the river to Montreal for operations later in the same year around Lake Champlain.

### *Destruction of Fort Frontenac*

The tide of French fortune began to ebb when the English took the offensive on Lake Ontario in 1758. General Bradstreet assembled at Oswego a force of about thirty-five hundred men, and in August set out along the lake shore for Fort Frontenac. On August 26 Indian scouts from Frontenac discovered the English at Henderson Bay, and on the next day Bradstreet's forces appeared before the fort, which surrendered readily, having a garrison of but some fifty men. The English secured large quantities of military supplies and naval stores, including seven vessels. Five of the boats were burned and two retained to help carry back the booty, which included cannon captured from General Braddock by the French. The forces of General Bradstreet returned to the shores of Henderson Bay and remained there several days so as to avoid French reenforcements en route up the river to Frontenac. The latter forces retired when they learned

of the surrender and destruction of Fort Frontenac, whereupon the English returned to Oswego and greatly strengthened its fortifications. Oswego remained in British possession until June, 1796, when it was turned over to the United States under treaty.

In 1759 the French had withdrawn to La Presentation and Fort Levis, on an island nearby, as fortified outposts to guard the upper river. Small scouting camps were located on Galloup Island, Grenadier Island in Ontario, and near the present site of Cape Vincent, and from these points the Indians and colonial scouts of the French kept watch upon English frontier operations.

#### *General Amherst's River Expedition*

In September of 1759 Quebec fell before the English and colonials, who had also captured Niagara, Ticonderoga and Crown Point. Of the vast highway to the west, the French held only that part of the St. Lawrence between Montreal and the Thousand Islands, and this they held under hopeless struggle for a year. In 1760 the English made plans for the capture of Montreal, despatching three expeditions for the purpose, one from Quebec, another by way of Lake Champlain, and the largest from Oswego through Ontario and the St. Lawrence. General Jeffrey Amherst was placed in command of the expedition outfitted at Oswego, which numbered some ten thousand regular and colonial forces and seven hundred Indians under Sir William Johnson, the great Commis-

sioner to the Iroquois nations. Colonel Sir Frederick Haldimand led a small force ahead of the main detachment, but found that enemy outposts had been withdrawn to La Presentation and Fort Levis. The first troops embarked on the vessels Mohawk and Onondaga August 7, 1760, and the main forces in 177 batteaux and 72 whaleboats had all embarked by the 13th, encamping the night of the 13th or 14th on Grenadier Island beyond the head of the St. Lawrence river. The first sailing vessels, while pursuing a French batteau discovered at Buck (Carleton) Island, became lost in the maze of channels of the middle islands, and arrived at the new French shipyard at Point Baril, near the site of the village of Maitland, after the great fleet of small boats had swept down through the river and landed near La Presentation to prepare for the attack on Fort Levis. This fortified position was on an island sometimes called Ile Royale, or by its Indian name Oraconenton, and completely commanded the St. Lawrence. The fortifications were laid out in 1759 by Chevalier de Levis, completed by Pouchot, French commander of the post, the next year, and consisted of an outer row or girdle of fallen trees, a water-filled ditch and sharpened stakes and an earth-banked parapet enclosing the gun mounts and quarters.

The English soon reduced the fortification by the use of artillery, losing about twenty killed and as many wounded, while the defenders suffered a dozen killed and about forty wounded. The surrendered men were sent back

on the long overland and water journey to New York, and Lord Amherst's expedition continued down the river. During the attack on Fort Levis the English burned a small church and trading outpost on Gallop island, below the fortification a short distance, claiming that a scalp was found in the religious edifice.

### *Canada Won For The English*

The last stronghold of French authority, Montreal, was invested by the three armies on September 7, 1760, and Governor Vaudreuil was compelled to make a formal surrender of his Canadian dominions.

General Amherst's expedition returned up the St. Lawrence from the successful investment of Montreal in October, reaching the head of the Thousand Islands the 21st. Camp was made near Lake Ontario on the south side when a storm of rain and snow held the forces two days, and the men finally reached Oswego October 27, many of the troops marching overland and along the sandy beaches of Ontario because of the inclement weather.

English soldiers now replaced the French throughout the long water route to the west, and English and colonial traders entered into the Indian fur traffic by way of the St. Lawrence, in competition with the older French associations. Great fur companies were organized, as well as land companies to induce settlements, and extensive

import houses to distribute the manufactured wares of England. The traffic in pelts increased along the upper river and through Lake Ontario, but the English made no attempts to establish strong forts or protected trading settlements along the Thousand Islands or at the site of Fort Frontenac.

### *Carleton Island During The Revolution*

It was not until mutterings of the coming struggle of the American colonial revolution were heard along the border that the Island region resumed its strategic importance. The English traders had established themselves in a small way at Buck or Deer Island, later named Carleton Island, a few miles below Cape Vincent, for traffic with the Indians, and the English in 1774-75 maintained a few men for the transshipment of military and naval stores to the upper lake posts. It became a great gathering place for Island Indians and other tribesmen friendly to the English, and a retreat for Loyalists from the revolting colonies.

Expeditions of scouts and raiding parties were assembled at the island, or at the "Great Camp" of the red allies on the mainland nearby, and from here the Indians, white woodsmen and regular troops of the British plunged into the woods or followed the lake shore to Salmon River or Oswego, then on to the frontier line of the colonists, the Mohawk river and the Susquehanna. The raiders from Carleton were responsible for the slaughter

and destruction of farm homes and settlements at Cherry Valley, Wyoming, the Cedars, Stony Arabia, and the surrounding country.

In 1775 Colonel Guy Johnson, son-in-law and nephew of the famous old English commissioner to the Iroquois (who had died the previous year), stopped at Carleton on his way from Oswego down the St. Lawrence to Montreal with a band of Indian warriors and many Tories who had abandoned colonial New York upon the outbreak of the revolution. The younger Johnson had assembled a great conference of Indians at Oswego in May, 1775, and persuaded nearly all with the exception of the Oneidas and some Tuscaroras to espouse the cause of the English. He was assisted by the two Butlers, whose name became a curse among the outlying settlers of New York, and Johnson also persuaded the Mohawk Chief Thayendanegea, called Joseph Brant, brother of old Sir William Johnson's Indian wife, Mollie Brant, to take up arms against the colonists.

In 1776 Sir John Johnson, son and heir by his English wife of the late commissioner, also left his extensive lands and fine dwelling in the Mohawk country and fled to Canada with numerous retainers and settlers. In Canada he recruited the Royal New York Regiment, known as the "Royal Greens" or "Johnson Greens." With Johnson came a son-in-law of Sir William, Colonel Daniel Claus, who became an Indian commissioner in Canada for operations along the New York frontier.

When the plan of reducing the colony of New York was put into operation in 1777 by means of an expedition up through Lake Champlain from Montreal under General Burgoyne, with a second force working up the Hudson from New York and a third coming from the St. Lawrence and Ontario through the Mohawk valley, Carleton Island was chosen as the rendezvous for the Indians of the third contingent. Lt. Col. Barry St. Ledger was put in command of the St. Lawrence forces, and on July 8 the expedition was assembled at Carleton and at the big Indian camp on the mainland nearby. Col. John Butler came from Oswego to join the force, which proceeded by water to Henderson Bay and then along the old war trail, the sandy beaches, to Oswego. The following engagement at Oriskany prevented this force from carrying out its object, and the retreat was made through forest trails and rivers to Oswego, and thence back to Carleton and Montreal. The failure of this expedition contributed to the defeat of Burgoyne's army, which also failed to receive any aid from Sir Henry Clinton's army at New York.

### *Fort Haldimand*

Carleton Island received its name in 1778 as the result of the reports of Lieutenants Twiss and Glennie and Captain Schank of the Navy, sent up the St. Lawrence by General Haldimand to report on the advisability of strengthening the defenses of the upper river. After a

complete inspection of La Presentation at Oswegatchie, Cadaraqui (now Kingston) and "Buck or Deer Island" as it was called, the military men decided that the post at the latter place possessed superior merits for shipbuilding, cultivation of the land and ease of defense when a suitable fort should be constructed. As the island's name had been confused often with the "Isle aux Chevreuil" of the French (Grenadier in Lake Ontario) Lieutenant Twiss suggested that the island be named Carleton in honor of the retired governor of Canada, and the fortification "Fort Haldimand." General Haldimand gave his endorsement, and the island has since been known by that name.

Governor Haldimand was familiar with the Thousand Islands as a result of his experiences there during the French war, and this accounts for his determination to make a strong post at Carleton.

The fort on the bluff was continually strengthened throughout the years of the Revolution, and the shipyard on the point below the fort was a scene of continuous activity. Carleton became the chief storehouse and point of transshipment for supplies going to Oswego, Niagara and Detroit. A number of armed sailing vessels as well as numerous batteaux and scows were constructed for the use of the military forces, and both military and naval detachments of artificers were continually employed until the order was received from General Haldimand to cease



construction work in the spring of 1783, when news reached Canada of the peace negotiations of November, 1782.

The point of land extending westward from the fort was known as "Government Point" and was restricted to use for quarters and storehouses. The commander of the post was not permitted to honor "patents" for grants of land to individuals on the point, as was done on the main body of the island. The "King's Garden," a tract of twenty or thirty acres first cleared and planted, is still pointed out on the south side of the island.

From Carleton Island the English sent their scouting parties to the Mohawk country and watched the moves of the Continental forces at Fort Stanwix, Schenectady, Fort Hunter and elsewhere in central New York. The Indians assembled in large numbers to draw supplies and presents and to receive instructions and rewards for raids upon the settlers. At no time was the post in danger of attack, though the efforts of the commanders to strengthen the fortifications were made with that eventuality in view. Traders bound up or down the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence tarried a while under the sheltering protection of Fort Haldimand, and bartered powder, shot, rum, knives, beads and blankets for the furs of the Indians. The commander of the post complained that when the traders were operating too freely the Indians failed to bring in fresh venison for exchange at the post, preferring to barter at the nearest source of desired supplies.

## *Kingston Established*

Carleton Island and Fort Haldimand remained in the possession of the English, owing to uncertainty about the boundary lands and waters, until the outbreak of the war of 1812. In 1788 a new survey of Carleton and Kingston was made by Captain Mann for the British, to decide which was the better station for the King's ships and protection of lake navigation. Kingston was decided upon, and construction work started at that port, with the result that in 1789 all of the stores with the exception of a few cannon were removed to the north mainland. In 1793 there were still nineteen guns at Fort Haldimand and a few soldiers to prevent the burning of wooden quarters and storehouses by Indians, or encroachment by Americans. The guns were taken in that year to Toronto.

The port of Kingston grew steadily with the development of lake navigation and the settlement of the surrounding country by emigrants from the British islands as well as large numbers of Loyalists who had abandoned the American colonies, now free states, and were allotted as compensation tracts of the forest lands along the St. Lawrence and Bay of Quinte. In 1799 Kingston possessed a large barracks, a hospital, storehouses and a church. The remains of old Fort Frontenac were still visible. Kingston became the storehouse for military and civilian supplies destined for the forts and settlements of the west, where new towns were being laid out and great reaches of

the forest lands were being cleared by the hardy pioneers. Many vessels were constructed in the shipyard established by the naval officers, while civilians also entered into the task of providing shipping for the increasing traffic on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River.

In 1808 a formal demand for the surrender of Carleton Island was made by Augustus Sacket, collector of Sackets Harbor, and by Lieut. T. Cross of the same place, commanding a detachment assigned to the duty of guarding some point on the river. The request was refused by Major McKenzie of Kingston, who added six men to the post previously occupied by a corporal and three men. In June of 1812 after news of the formal declaration of war was received along the northern border a small force of volunteers from Millen's bay, on the American shore nearby, surprised the garrison of three men and two women, captured the fort and burned all of the wooden buildings. It was never after used as a fortified post. Some of the stone chimneys of the quarters in the fort on the bluff are still standing, much battered by winds and storms of a century.

### *The Border in 1812-14*

The troublesome years of the conflict from 1812 to 1814 were a time of trial and anxiety along the Island region. Settlers were in continual fear of raids by enemy bands, and Indians still lurked in the woods throughout

the border country and among the Islands, ready to plunder whenever the opportunity offered.

Kingston had become the trading center for both shores of the St. Lawrence, where the ashes of forest clearings as well as grain and produce were exchanged for manufactured goods. Montreal and Quebec were the great markets for logs and lumber cleared from the banks of the St. Lawrence and its tributary streams—a trade which had grown to large proportions, especially on the American side where Macomb's great purchase of 1791 in northern New York was gradually being parcelled out to land companies and settlers, but where there was much valuable timber land easy of access without sufficient guardians.

On the upper river about two miles below the present site of the village of Cape Vincent a settlement called Port Putnam had been established following the clearing made in 1801 by Abijah Putnam. This small settlement did not flourish, and was abandoned in favor of the Port of Cape Vincent established by the great French landowner, James de Le Ray, who had a small clearing made at Gravelly Point in 1811, and also a dock, house and tavern. These were soon followed by stores and dwellings until a considerable settlement, with a customs officer, was formed by the year 1812. The port was named Cape Vincent after James de Le Ray's son, Vincent, who remained as agent in northern New York many years

while the lands purchased by his father were being settled, and where so many friends of Napoleon and his brother Joseph Bonaparte gathered during the latter's years of exile in Northern New York.

Because of the American embargo law of 1808 the trade between individuals and traders in the settlements across the border waters was restricted to a considerable extent until the outbreak of hostilities in 1812, and then for three years traffic up and down the Island reaches of the St. Lawrence was limited to the movement of military and naval supplies and men, with occasional smuggling operations to and from the settlements at Kingston, Cape Vincent, Gananoque, Brockville, Prescott and Ogdensburg.

On Kingston was based the fleet of Sir James Yeo, and at Sackets Harbor was the flotilla commanded by Commodore Chauncey, both of which did considerable cruising up and down the lake but never engaged in any action of a decisive nature. The British fleet made a short bombardment of the entrenchments at Sackets Harbor in July 1812, and again in 1813 covered the landing of troops on May 29 which resulted in the "Battle of Sackets Harbor," in which both sides retreated after the loss of important officers. The American fleet in November of 1812 made an attack on the British vessel Royal George and the land batteries of Kingston, and then withdrew.

At French Creek and Bartletts Point, now Clayton, was fought another small engagement between British military and naval forces and part of the ill-fated expedition of the American General Wilkinson which met disaster on Chryslers field in Canada. General Brown of Brownville, Jefferson County, N. Y., commanded the battery at Bartletts Point, and the naval attack was repelled. Raids were made and prisoners and supplies captured on the American side at Cape Vincent, at Ogdensburg, the Britton Tavern near Linda Island below Cape Vincent; on the Canadian side, Brockville, Gananoque, Prescott, and throughout the island region. Many people of the larger settlements along the river moved to the interior. However, there was never the ferocity of the Indian raids of the Revolutionary period, and settlers continued to take up land along the St. Lawrence throughout these years of conflict.

### *The Peace of a Century*

The conclusion of peace in the latter part of 1814 brought military operations to a close, and the naval equipment at both Kingston and Sackets Harbor shipyards fell into disuse and decay. A treaty was entered into limiting the armament of craft on either side of the Great Lakes, which has resulted in quieting suspicion and has helped to maintain that peace of a century during which industry and civilization have brought prosperity and friendly sentiments along the northern border lands.

The only serious disturbances along the river since the days of 1812-14 were those of the so-called "Patriot War" in 1838, when conspirators on both sides of the border attempted an armed revolution and invasion, to free Canada and organize a republic. The venture lacked popular support, and was quelled at the "Battle of the Windmill," near Prescott, after which a number of conspirators including men from the American side were tried by court martial and sentenced to death. Some of the rebels were banished to Van Dieman's Land, from which a few returned in after years to their northern homes.

### *The Summer Playground*

From the earliest days of settlement along the Thousand Island region of the St. Lawrence there was a keen appreciation of the natural beauties of scenery and abundance of fishing and hunting in the innumerable blue-water channels and bays. In the 40's and 50's of the past century there began that steady stream of enthusiasts to the Islands for summer and fall weeks. As railroad facilities increased and steamboat traffic through the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence brought increasing trade and growth of population, there was a corresponding increase in the number of people who made yearly pilgrimages for health and recreation to northern border waters. The early builders and statesmen of Canada as well as governors, senators, presidents and legislators of the United States seemed to have a marked preference for

the wholesome sport and vigorous atmosphere of the Island region, or perhaps the fact that these men were frequent visitors was of more note in the correspondence and newspaper reports of the middle decades of the nineteenth century. It was during these years that fishing and hunting camps were first built along the American islands, for the Canadian government retained title to most of the land within its border waters, and still retains much of it. In succeeding years the tide of summer traffic swelled steadily, and parks and cottages, hotels and palatial "camps" increased until the name "Venice of America" bore a fitting tribute.

### **The Indians of the Islands**

All that remains of the great and little tribes and nations of Indians who hunted, fished and lived among the Thousand Islands—the last representatives of those warriors and trappers to come before the modern-day travelers on the St. Lawrence are the occasional peddlers of baskets and bead-decorated bags and moccasins from the St. Regis reservation below Ogdensburg, or perhaps from one of the northern reservations or Indian villages of Canada. Some students of Indian customs, habits and relics believe that a race closely akin to the Esquimaux once inhabited the St. Lawrence region, the supposed proof being found in fishing gear and implements occasionally excavated over a broad area. The Algonquin Indians of Canada had no traditions of an earlier race



such as the Esquimaux, nor did the Iroquois Indians of New York.

From the earliest experience of the French as well as stories and traditions told to explorers and traders of a later day it is evident that tribes or families or groups of the Iroquois were in possession of the river territory as far as Montreal, or Hochelaga, from some distant time down to the first visit of a Frenchman, Cartier, to that Indian settlement in 1534. Other Iroquois villages and summer camps were undoubtedly located along the St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario, especially in that section so famous for its hunting and fishing in the early days of white settlement—the lakes and bays and wooded lands between the south shore of the St. Lawrence and the Black River country in northern New York.

The constant warfare between Algonquins of the north and west—the term Algonquin including all tribes of kindred tongue and customs in Canada—and the Iroquois federation to the south had finally concentrated the latter throughout the beautiful lake district of central New York. Here the Iroquois constructed their “long houses” for permanent abode and fortified the larger villages with imposing stockades of crossed tree trunks. Outside the villages were the areas of cultivated tobacco, maize, beans and pumpkins which enabled these Indians to subsist throughout the winter months, and sometimes led to forays by the less provident savages of the north. Though

their permanent homes were concentrated within a restricted area, the Iroquois hunted far and wide for beaver, deer, fish and scalps of their enemies.

### *The People of the Long House*

That remarkable federation called themselves the "Ho-de-no-sau-nee" or "people of the long house," from the typical construction of their abodes. These were narrow houses containing many families, each with its own space and fire. The houses were made of long rows of poles stuck in the ground and bent together to form the roof support, the whole being covered with bark to shed water and to keep out a great measure of the cold in winter. Apertures in the roof allowed the smoke to escape, and doorways at each end were covered with loose hides.

By agreement their hunting grounds were divided by well-defined boundary lines within which the particular nation was sovereign, subject to such agreements as might be made at the great yearly council fire in the country of the Onondagas. Northern New York, from the Mohawk river through the Adirondacks on the north and to the St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario on the west was set off by "lines of property"—to the Mohawk nation on the east and north, the Oneidas on the northwest, including the present limits of the Thousand Islands, and the Onondagas in the central part, with a narrow strip running to eastern Lake Ontario. To the south and west extending to Lake Erie were the Cayugas, the Senecas, and later the

Tuscaroras, a kindred people from the Carolinas admitted by treaty in 1715.

The northern Adirondacks were also claimed by Indians of the Canadian Algonquin family who originally came from the neighborhood of the Saguenay river. Their improvidence in failing to provide stores for winter use often led to the eating of bark and buds, which gained for them the name Adirondacks, "tree eaters," applied by the hardy and more intelligent Mohawks. This name early supplanted the old Iroquois designation "Couch-sach-ra-ge" for the great northern wilderness.

The Iroquois were never subdued by Indian opponents, and only made peace with their Algonquin enemies when the power of the latter was used in cooperation with the mightier arm of the French. Whether their enemies were kindred peoples of the western lakes or Algonquins of the north and the Hudson River and New England villages, there was no mercy shown in warfare. The country of the Hurons north and east of the lake of that name was devastated in 1650, and the next year the Neutral Nation, living between the Hurons and the Niagara river, was destroyed by these relentless kinsmen. The Eries on the south side of Lake Erie were destroyed in 1652, and in 1672 the kindred people on the banks of the Susquehanna, the Andastes, were conquered and forced into humiliating tribute.

Other war raids were carried through the country of

the Illinois to the Mississippi, and eastward to the Main woods. The furious warriors of the Mohawk and Oneida nations nearly carried out their threat to exterminate their French and Algonquin opponents in those devastating raids to the very doorsteps of Montreal following Governor Denonville's punitive expedition around Lake Ontario in 1687, and the seizure of Iroquois warriors at Fort Frontenac in 1688.

In one of the communications received by Sir William Johnson, the Indian Commissioner of New York, in 1756 from the Onondagas complaint was made of encroachment by Pennsylvania forces on the south of the Federation, in the lands of tribes subdued by the Iroquois. The English were building forts there, and this caused the Onondagas to say that they did not understand the manner of warfare of the English. When the Iroquois went to war they exterminated their enemies, and that ended it, but the English built forts, seeming to desire possession of the land only.

Throughout the French occupation of Canada the Thousand Islands were frequently visited by both Iroquois and Algonquin tribes, and scattered families of the latter undoubtedly remained hidden among the secluded retreats through all those years of conflict. When the English took over control of the river there was peace between the tribes, for the Iroquois were staunch allies of the new masters of Canada, and the English continued the

policy of developing trade and friendship with Canadian tribes.

### *The Mississaguas*

Between the years 1760 and 1783, the closing years respectively of the French war and the American revolution, there was little attempt at settlement within the Island region, as traders at Buck Island (Carleton), old Frontenac (Kingston) and Oswegatchie (Ogdensburg) were interested in bartering for pelts rather than the less remunerative burdens of clearing and settling the country. The Indians of the Islands made permanent homes within those secluded haunts, and for two or three generations their descendants remained along the river—being known as the Mississaguas as far down the St. Lawrence as Prescott. Below that point the islands were claimed by the St. Regis Indians.

The Indians of the islands may have been of Iroquois or Algonquin extraction, or perhaps a mixture, for the earlier settlers along the shores differed in their recollections. Fishing and hunting were their means of gaining a living, and periodic migrations were made to the island lakes and woods to the north of the St. Lawrence, or south and east toward the Lesser Wilderness and the Great Wilderness. The Indians called the Adirondack woods and mountains the Great Wilderness, and the region between Black River, the Lake Ontario shore and Onedia Lake was the Lesser Wilderness, in which there

were vast tracts of virgin forests and fine hunting for deer, bear, elk, fox, beaver and other game even after white settlers had moved in and cleared farms and built settlements.

These Indians were staunch supporters of the English during the wars of 1775-83 and 1812-14, but in the latter were used only to a very small extent. They continued upon the Islands until 1826, by which time the increased number of farms and villages and the operation of lumbermen and squatters had restricted their sources of food supply and revenue. Many of the Indians left for the northern woods of Canada, and the streams and bays of the lower reaches of the St. Lawrence, leaving but a few families of the once numerous Island Indians. These were persuaded to settle on an island in the upper Bay of Quinte, near Belleville, where they were taught farming under missionary guidance, and later were transferred to a large tract of land north of Coburg, Ontario.

The Canadian government took over whatever title these Mississaguas had in the islands of the Canadian waters, and administered the revenue for the benefit of the Indians and their descendants.

The various agencies of the Canadian government in which rested the administration of Canada's portion of the Thousand Islands withheld the larger number from private title. This accounts for the difference in appearance and use of the two sides of the river today. Many

of the Canadian islands still possess the rugged charms which attracted the first voyageurs and early travelers, while on the American side the summer camps and cottages show the great popularity and development due to private ownership. In the interests of public health and recreation the Canadian government grants permission for temporary camps on its islands, and the privilege is made available to large numbers throughout the summer and fall months.

### *The Painted Rock*

One of the old Indian land-marks often cited by writers and travelers was the painting on the riverside cliff to the east of Brockville. Many deductions have been drawn from it, but early legend made easy explanation. The painting represented roughly a canoe containing several Indians and two white men, the latter in postures indicating that they were falling out of the craft. Each year a group of Indians would appear and re-color the lines of the painting, with incidental wierd ceremonies understandable to the Indians only. These visits continued long after the river shores were settled with farm homes and villages.

According to legend, the occasion of this rude painting was an accident which befell some of Frontenac's Indians back in 1696, upon the return of the vigorous old governor's punitive expedition into the country of the Onondagas in central New York. Among the prisoners taken

were two Englishmen, who were being carried down the St. Lawrence in a canoe propelled by several Indians. Near Brockville a severe storm threatened the heavily laden canoe, so the Indians threw overboard the two Englishmen to lighten the craft or as a sacrifice to the angry spirit of the storm. The sacrifice proved unacceptable, for the Indians were all wrecked and drowned in the St. Lawrence near the great cliff. Other Indians of their tribe painted the picture commemorating the disaster, and apparently continued for many generations to offer incantations and pleas to the angry spirit.

### **The American Islands**

The earliest grants of title to the Thousand Islands were made under the French administration in 1714, when they were conveyed as a "fief" to Sieurs Piot de Langlosierie and Petit who took the oath of fealty. When these men died half of the islands were granted to Louis Hertel and Sieur Lamarque, who married daughters of Langloisierie, and the other half to Eustace Dumont, who had also married a daughter of the original owner. One of the later claimants of part of the islands through purchase was William Claus, son of Colonel Daniel Claus, the latter known for his work among the Indian allies of the English during the Revolutionary period. The widow of William Claus, Catherine Claus, together with her four children, John Johnson Claus, Warren Claus, the widow Geale and her children and Catherine Anne Claus



took the oath of fealty for one-fourth of the fief. This had come through purchase from Jacob Jordan, Simon Fraser and Louis de Chambly, whose title to half the fief was confirmed in 1781. One-fourth was held by Jouvier Dontail Lacroix, through gift to his father by Marie Anne Celeron, widow of Sieur Lamarque.

Evidently the early French and English owners never made use of the lands conveyed, nor does it appear that the British government made compensation when half the islands were conveyed to the United States following the boundary survey begun in 1817, and the Porter-Barclay treaty signed in 1822.

This survey and agreement settled the title to the Thousand Islands, which had been in dispute and uncertainty ever since the close of the Revolution in 1783, when the dividing line was set at the "main channel of the St. Lawrence." Though title to the islands could not be guaranteed, this was not sufficient impediment to settlers or timber operators. On the larger islands small farms were cleared and cultivated, after the timber had been made into staves or rafted down to the great ship-yards and lumber mills of Montreal and Quebec. One of the earliest of these men was William Wells, whose name was given to the large island known as Wellsley Island. About 1790 he began cutting timber which he converted into staves for the English market, and in the course of a number of years he and his men had cleared the best timber from a number of the islands.

Carleton Island was similarly cleared at an early date, and the land cultivated by people who were anxious for a clear title from the American government. Around the shores of Carleton Island there were a great many "shanties" of the fishermen during the early years of the last century.

After the larger islands and accessible lands along shore were cleared of the best timber, and following the advent of steam navigation, two points in the St. Lawrence became headquarters for making up rafts and squaring timber for Montreal and Quebec—the busy settlement at French Creek, later named Clayton, and Wolf Island. At the latter place there is a small cove near the foot, on the north side, where logs and poles may yet be seen in the depths of clear blue water. At Garden Island, opposite Kingston near Wolf, was another one of the later stations for shipwork and timber operations.

### *The Indian Title*

Title to all the lands bordering upon the south shore of the St. Lawrence adjacent to the Thousand Islands came to the State of New York by treaty made with the Oneida Indians at Fort Stanwix in 1788. The Oneidas, who alone of the six nations of the Iroquois remained steadfast friends of the colonists during the Revolution, claimed title to all this territory under ancient agreement of the Indian federation, though it was common hunting ground for all the Iroquois.

When the State of New York conveyed these lands to Alexander Macomb in 1791 the islands within the boundary waters were supposed to be included, with the exception of Carleton. However, these islands were never conveyed until after the formal survey begun in 1817, which attached the American islands to the adjacent townships. Colonel Elisha Camp, a prominent resident of Sackets Harbor, N. Y., then became owner, and transferred his title to Yates & McIntyre of New York city.

In the early days of "tourist" fishermen Azariah Walton and Chesterfield Parsons of Alexandria Bay purchased the northern half of Wellsley Island from Yates & McIntyre and also "all the islands in the American waters from the foot of Round Island, at Clayton, to Morristown" for \$3,000. This was in 1845. Mr. Walton, who was senior member of the firm Walton & Cornwall, later became sole owner of the islands, and when he died in 1853 Andrew Cornwall continued the business with John F. Walton as junior partner of Cornwall & Walton. This firm purchased from the estate of Azariah Walton all the islands owned by him and also nearly all of the remaining half of Wellsley Island, thus becoming owners of practically all the American islands.

The firm cut fire wood for steamers on the most accessible islands, and soon after the Civil War of 1861-65 they were able to realize a further profit in the sale of land to summer visitors. This was a course decided upon

when coal began to supplant wood in river and lake navigation about 1860. In 1877 both Cornwall and Walton retired and the firm of Cornwall Brothers was formed to continue the real estate projects and general trading of the founders.

### *Early Tourists*

Among the early visitors to the St. Lawrence for fishing and hunting were Martin Van Buren and Silas Wright, the one a president of the United States and the other a senator and governor of New York. Other men who frequented the river in the 40's and 50's were William L. Marcy, William H. Seward, Thomas G. Alvord, lieutenant-governor of New York, and a genial crowd of political notables who listened to the stories of Azariah Walton, or gathered under the hospitable roof of Charles Crossman's tavern. The latter succeeded to the business of his father-in-law in 1848, and helped to spread the fame of the Thousand Islands as a resort for hunters, fishermen and seekers for healthful recreation in summer.

Among the later presidents who fished at the Thousand Islands were Grant, Arthur, Cleveland and Roosevelt.

President Monroe in 1817 visited the St. Lawrence. He arrived in Ogdensburg August 1, and was joined by General Jacob Brown and others and the party proceeded to Sackets Harbor where the barracks and fortress were inspected, and then the chief executive embarked on board

the U. S. brig Jones and sailed over Lake Ontario to Niagara.

Other men of note who traveled upon the river and remarked upon the beauty of the Thousand Islands were the authors, James Fenimore Cooper and Washington Irving, later Dr. Johan Kohl, the great traveler and scientist of Bremen, Benson J. Lossing, historical writer, the Prince of Wales and his imposing staff of military and civilian notables in 1860, who visited the Canadian towns along the St. Lawrence and were given a rousing reception previous to the Prince's visit to the United States.

Writers, scientists, statesmen, clergymen, diplomats, captains of industry and other notables of later days came in numbers too numerous to mention, and carried away with them a keen appreciation of the natural beauties and healthful climate of the Islands, as well as its abundance of game fish and birds.

## Lost Channel

If the present-day visitor to the Thousand Islands will venture into that maze of channels and small islands on the north of Wellsley Island, above Rockport, without the guidance of one familiar with the waters, he will have about the same experience as those puzzled English sailors and soldiers back in 1760—the last year of the French war. When General Amherst's great flotilla of small

boats was bound down the St. Lawrence from Oswego in August of that year the leading boats were two armed sail craft, the Onondaga and Mohawk. The lookouts discovered a batteau leaving Buck (Carleton) Island just before the English approached, and the latter immediately gave pursuit down the river, led by the Onondaga.

The fleeing craft was able to keep clear, and soon crossed to the north side of the river, where the islands were more numerous and closely grouped. Here the English vessel was met by a hot fusilade of arrows and musketry from the wooded shores and rocky bluffs, but cleared away opposition by heavy gunfire. The wind lightened, and the lookout lost sight of the fleeing boat, nor was he able to discern a good channel.

Captain Loring of the Onondaga gave orders to lower a boat and sent word back to the Mohawk not to approach the dangerous rocks, uncertain channels and swift waters. Another small boat found a safe passage for the vessel, and anchor was dropped below the thickest of the islands. Here the Onondaga waited for Coxswain Terry and his crew, who had set out to find the Mohawk. Captain Loring's own narrative tells of the naming of this channel, as follows:

"After some time, I ordered Ensign Barry to take the cutter and search for the coxswain and his crew. After some hours Ensign Barry returned. He had been bewildered among the numerous channels, not being able to

even distinguish the channels through which the vessel had come, nor the one by which she entered the group of islands, nor had he discovered the first boat lowered. Ensign Barry called it "The River of the Lost Channel," and in that way was it ever after spoken of among the men. Thinking that coxswain Terry and his crew had boarded the Mohawk, and that they would return to us when we joined the fleet, I determined to sail as soon as the wind freshened."

Captain Loring was unable to sail that day, August 14, and was compelled to wait because of contrary winds and narrow channels until the 18th, and the army before Fort Levis was reached on the 19th. Firing had been heard a short distance from the Onondaga, from which a lookout had discovered a French brig a few miles away, and under date of the 19th Captain Loring's journal said:

"Reached the army today and reported to General Amherst. Coxswain Terry and his crew are undoubtedly lost, as they did not board the Mohawk, but started to return to the Onondaga. The firing on the day before yesterday was the attack on the French brig by our armed galleys under the command of Col. Williamson, who captured her after a severe engagement lasting two hours. It was a most gallant affair. The brig has been named the Williamson, after the gallant colonel. The fort is to be invested tomorrow."

## Thousand Island Park

The southwesterly part of Wellsley Island has been known for nearly half a century as Thousand Island Park and the popularity of this beautiful resort owes its inception to the efforts of the late Rev. J. F. Dayan, then a retired Methodist minister, who sought to establish a development among the Islands comparable to Asbury Park, Ocean Grove and Chautauqua.

It was recognized by this pioneer of the park that there was a demand among religious people for a place to spend their summers which would provide the benefits of change of scene, healthful location, accessibility, beauties of nature, and yet be free from the dissipations and excesses of frivolous people. Indeed, the thought of religion was first in the minds of the men who sponsored the move, and the numerous restrictions which were placed on the island such, for instance, as the non-stopping of the Island steamers at the dock on Sunday and the ban on amusements, brought much criticism from other island visitors who felt that the Sabbath was a day of recreation as well as the other six days of the week, and that the operations of steam boats on Sundays meant a pleasant day for many whose holidays were restricted to the week end.

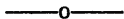
However, there were enough who felt as did Parson Dayan and in a single day the original association sold \$22,000 worth of lots. The magnificent Columbian



hotel was built and for years was a mecca for tourists. Many conventions were held there, until fire wiped out this great hotel.

During the recent years there has been a disposition on the part of many of the stockholders to change the policy of the association. The majority of the stock is owned by residents of Syracuse. Recent negotiations by Mormons, now known as Saints of the Latter Day Church of Christ, for a controlling interest in the association failed though the report caused considerable fear on the part of many of the minority stockholders that a colony of this western church would be established in this, the mother state of the Saints.

Thousand Island park contains scores of cottages of families residing in all parts of the United States, and there is a strong community spirit, for some of the people have returned there year after year for a span of two generations.



## The Legend of Hiawatha

To most students of Iroquois legends and Thousand Island history there has come a certainty that the St. Lawrence bore some part in the origin of that beautiful legend of Hiawatha. The poem of Longfellow placed Hiawatha in the west, but the poem does not give the

legend in the strict interpretation of the Iroquois. Kindred tribes of the Five Nations living at the headwaters of the Great Lakes preserved in a large measure the same traditions as the distant Iroquois of central New York, traditions told around the great council fires when the old wampum records were scanned to reveal ancient facts and treaties.

The Thousand Island region may justly lay claim to the origin of this legend, which must have had some basis in fact. The scenery of the Islands corresponds to the Indian stories, which liken this region to Manatoana, the garden of the Great Spirit. Early recognition of this was made in the name of Calumet Island, opposite Clayton, which resembles the shape of the great peace pipe fashioned by Gitche Manito when he called for peace on earth. Afterward, when peace was broken and the beautiful garden with the peace pipe was gathered up by Gitche Manito, the mighty, into the vast blanket to be carried away from the recreant people, the blanket broke and the garden fell into the St. Lawrence, forming the Thousand Islands.

The best rendering of the Iroquois version was made by Mr. J. V. Clark of Manlius, as related to him by Onondaga chiefs in 1843 and reported to the New York Historical Society. Mr. Clark's version is quoted by most writers of historical articles relating to hunting grounds and legends of the Iroquois and the early settle-

ment of New York. It was generally accepted that Hiawatha came to live among the Onondagas, and was considered their wisest counselor and ablest hunter. He was the legendary founder of the federation of Five Nations.

The hero of Longfellow's poem is of the Algonquins, ancient enemies of the Iroquois. The poet used the name Hiawatha because of its cadence. His hero's real name was Manabozho, or Michabou, which means Great Hare. His geneology was thus rendered by Longfellow:

Nakomis, swinging among the grape vines on the full moon, fell to the pararies of the earth. She bore a daughter named Wenonah, who was espoused of the west wind, Mudjekeewis:

“Thus was born my Hiawatha,  
Thus was born the child of wonder.”

But this was, as admitted by the poet, fancy added to lore learned from the works of Schoolcraft, Catlin and others, including an Objibway chief who lectured in Boston in 1849.

The legend as preserved by the Iroquois is as follows:

In the dim vista of ages past the diety presiding over the streams which provided food for the peoples of the earth came to earth to visit its inhabitants, being commissioned by the greater diety, Ha-wa-ne-u, to clear streams for passage and to find good things for his people.

Ta-onu-ya-wat-ha was the lesser diety and he appeared as a speck over the waters to two young Onondaga braves, who were looking over the blue expanse of the waters of the Thousand Islands. The speck danced over the river, ever growing in size and ever approaching the mortals who watched with fear its approach.

As it neared the shore it assumed the form of a venerable Indian, seated in a pure white canoe propelled by the strong arm of the god. Silently he made his way to the shore and there he landed, making fast his canoe, then ascending a nearby hill on the summit of which he stood gazing in contemplation and approval of the vista spread before him.

Then he came to the hunters and after inquiring of the difficulties of their state of life he disclosed his exalted character. He bade the men accompany him on this first "tour of the Islands," from which they ascended to the lesser lake country. He made the fishing and hunting grounds free to all, taught the men how to raise corn and beans, removed all obstructions from the navigable streams and became so enamoured of the world as reconstructed that he assumed the character and habits of a man—Hi-a-wat-ha, "very wise man."

He called a council of the tribes when a hostile invasion of enemies was threatened, and urged the need of a league for common defense. The Indians immediately formed the federation of the Five Nations. Thereafter

the great man arose and addressed the assembly as follows :

"Friends and Brothers, I have now fulfilled my mission on earth; I have done everything which can be done at present for the good of this great people. Age, infirmity and distress sit heavily upon me. During my sojourn among you I have removed all obstructions from your streams. Canoes can now pass everywhere. I have given you good fishing waters and good hunting grounds; I have taught you how to cultivate corn and beans, and have showed you the art of making cabins. Many other blessings I have liberally bestowed upon you.

"Lastly, I have now assisted you to form an everlasting league and covenant of strength and friendship, for your future safety and protection. If you preserve it without the admission of other people you will always be free, numerous and mighty. If other nations are admitted to your councils, they will sow jealousies among you and you will become enslaved, few and feeble.

"Remember these words; they are the last you will hear from the lips of Hiawatha. Listen, my friends: the Great-Master-of-Breath calls me to go. I have patiently awaited His summons. I am ready. Farewell."

Celestial voices in wonderful harmony sounded and the choirs of the Happy Hunting Grounds chanted the praises of the law giver and peacemaker, according to the legend. Then, while eyes were turned heavenwards, Hiawatha,

seated in his pure white canoe, was seen to rise, higher and higher to the vault of blue above, fading and fading from sight, going as he came, a speck of white against the blue.

### *Other Traditions*

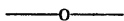
One of the traditions having to do with the migration of the Iroquois from their northern homes along the lower St. Lawrence to central New York tells of the feud with the Algonquins. At that time the Iroquois were few in numbers, and lived largely through the peaceful pursuits of agriculture, though somewhat under the dominance of the Algonquins who lived by hunting only. In a joint expedition of young braves of both peoples the Algonquins took the lead in the chase for several days, on the assumption that they were better hunters, and that the more peaceful Iroquois should do the menial work of skinning and preparing the game killed by the Algonquins. These latter met with no success, and the hunt was then in turn taken up by the young Iroquois, who brought in abundant game the first day for their Algonquin friends to skin and clean. This so angered the latter that in the night they murdered all the sleeping Iroquois.

The feeling between the tribes burst into open warfare, and gradually the Iroquois retreated up the St. Lawrence and to their final homes in central New York. This slow and bitter retreat was prolonged through many gen-

erations, until the warlike ferocity of the Iroquois became a menace to all surrounding peoples.

Another story of mythical character gives a pretty picture of the birth of the Iroquois peoples. On the South Branch of Sandy Creek at the eastern end of Lake Ontario, where a small stream emptied into the larger one amid tall woods of aged pine and tumbled heaps of rock, a blast of the storm god burst open the ground, and from the opening came forth a man and woman. They built a hut and reared a family in this beautiful hunting ground, full of beaver and deer and elk, and the streams teeming with salmon. From this family sprang the great race of Iroquois, as recounted to the children of many generations in the Long Houses.

In all the legends and mythical stories concerning the origin of these people the St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario region figure prominently. The present day summer playground of the border was their ancient homeland.



## Refugees of Napoleon's Empire

Among the points of interest at Cape Vincent is Restland, a summer home recently purchased by a Watertown resident from the descendants of Louis Peugnet, captain in the Emperor's body guard, who still wore in this country the cross of the Legion d' Honneur pinned on his breast by Napoleon Bonaparte. The home is located

on the shore of the St. Lawrence and faces Wolfe Island. For a century it remained in possession of the Peugnet family, but the last owners of this line resided in St. Louis, so they were willing to dispose of a property that had family associations for five generations and historical associations dating to the overthrow of Napoleon.

Louis Peugnet came to Cape Vincent in 1815, joining there a notable band of French exiles who had purchased land from the agency of Count James LeRay. There on the shores of the St. Lawrence it was proposed by some of the adventurous members of nobility and adherents of the Bonaparte regime to establish another "New France," and it was near the Peugnet home that the Cup and Saucer House was built for Napoleon, who was in exile at St. Helena. But the plot came to naught, owing to the death of the ex-emperor, and the next generation sought nothing more exciting in political fortunes than the offices of overseer of roads, poundmasters, county supervisor, etc.

The Peugnets became one of the substantial families of the town of Cape Vincent and numerous descendants of the former captain of Napoleon's body guard now reside throughout that section.

The Peugnet home was well built and, being modeled to French types, was artistic, a spot of loveliness in a wilderness country. To it came General LaFayette when he made a tour of the United States years after he

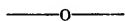


had come to the rescue of Washington in the war of the Revolution.

The owner has repaired and improved the property and has rechristened it "Restland," a title which bears much truth, for there Louis Peugnet, and his brothers Hyacinthe and Theophilus, found quiet and happiness after witnessing the collapse of their beloved empire.

Joseph Bonaparte, exiled ex-king of Spain, Naples and Jerusalem, was a visitor there and the Peugnet brothers were wont to go to Natural Bridge in Jefferson County, where the brother of Napoleon and possessor of the triple titles maintained a forest court in regal splendor.

Coaches in four made trips from one colony to another and the conventions of the capitols of Europe were maintained in a wilderness. Furniture, silver, candelabra and clothing, all came from France, and the beautiful scenery of this section provided a rare setting for the spendors of Paris.

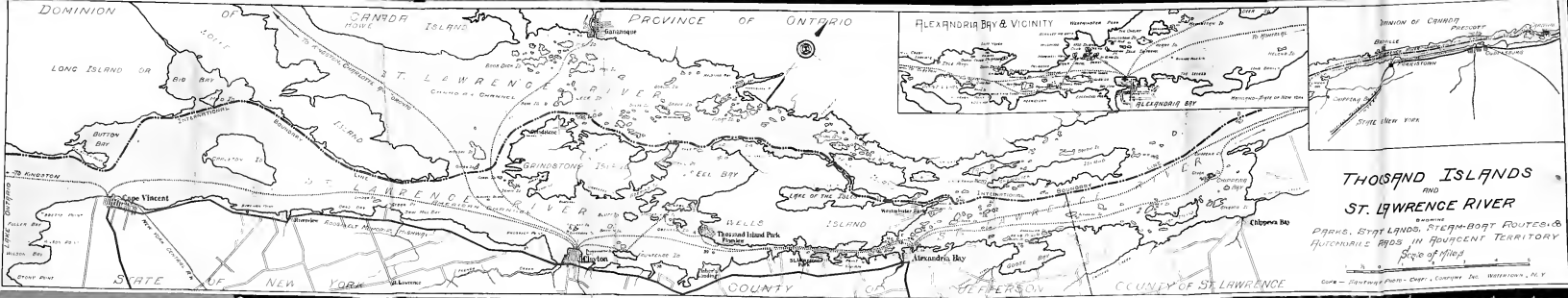


The Island region claims one of the features of the Sahara—mirages. Due to the clearness of the atmosphere the city of Kingston has been mirrored in the skies and the great forts of the Canadian city have been seen from long distances, sometimes erect and sometimes inverted, by residents of river towns. This phenomenon has also been observed at Sackets Harbor on Lake Ontario.





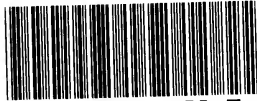






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